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**Grace Meng**

**Congress of the United States**  
**Sixth District, New York**

October 9, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

Since Hamas' indiscriminate attack on Israel Saturday morning, my office has received harrowing reports from constituents who remain in Israel and are seeking to return to the United States as soon as possible. I write to express my sincere concern for their wellbeing and safety.

Almost 50 years to the day of the start of the Yom Kippur War, Hamas terrorists crossed the border and began slaughtering Israelis and abducting hostages in towns in southern Israel. My office has received reports that Americans are among those taken hostage in Gaza, including New Yorkers. It has been devastating to see the horrific accounts of those around the country taking shelter from the thousands of rockets launched from Gaza. This past weekend was meant to be one of happiness and celebration for the Jewish community. Instead, my constituents were left distraught and in tears fearing for the safety of their friends and loved ones in Israel.

While I appreciate the steps the Biden administration is taking to provide additional security assistance to Israel, I urge the State Department to use all resources at its disposal to help those Americans that remain in Israel return to the United States. As you are aware, airlines have cancelled most flights out of Ben Gurion Airport, and some have suspended operations in the region. As the number of casualties continues to rise, my constituents who remain in Israel fear for their lives.

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Given the fluid situation on the ground, I ask that you provide my office with an update as soon as possible as to the status of the State Department's efforts to assist Americans in returning to the United States. This includes ensuring that commercial flights remain accessible to all Americans who remain in Israel and the Department's efforts to stay in contact with all those looking to leave. I ask that the Department also provide an update on other opportunities for evacuation, including chartered flights or military aircraft. As our allies and partners begin to explore this option for their respective citizens that remain in Israel, I urge the Department to consider these options, simultaneously.

At this harrowing moment in Israel's history, it is more important than ever that every American who is looking to return home have the opportunity to do so. I look forward to your quick response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Grace Meng'.

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

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